

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
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EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI SUPPORT FOR CAMP DAVID MEETING

REF: JIDDA 5959

FOR AMBASSADOR AND BOVIS FROM SAUNDERS

1. I WANT TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH YOU ON HOW WE
HANDLE OUR SAUDI RELATIONSHIP AS IT AFFECTS THE CAMP
DAVID MEETINGS. I THINK IT WILL BE USEFUL IF WE SHARE
WITH EACH OTHER OUR RESPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF WHAT THEY
ARE DOING SO THAT WE WILL HAVE THE BENEFIT OF YOUR
APPRAISAL ON THE GROUND AND YOU WILL KNOW HOW IT LOOKS
FROM HERE.

2. THIS WEEK I HAVE BEEN READING YOUR REPORTS ON THE
INTERESTING BURST OF SAUDI ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF THE
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CAMP DAVID MEETINGS, AND THEN THERE WAS KING KHALID'S
MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT.

3. AT THIS POINT, I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT I AM TORN
BETWEEN TWO ASPECTS OF WHAT THE SAUDIS ARE DOING.

A. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY ARE CLEARLY TRYING TO BE

HELPFUL IN PROMOTING SUPPORT FOR SADAT IN GOING TO CAMP DAVID. WE HAVE NOTED WITH APPRECIATION PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL'S EFFORTS IN DAMASCUS, BAGHDAD, AND AMMAN AND HIS INDICATION THAT SAG HAD REQUESTED ARAFAT TO WITHHOLD CRITICISM OF CAMP DAVID MEETING. WE ALSO NOTE WITH APPRECIATION THAT SAG HAS WEIGHED IN WITH UAE (ABU DHABI 2208) AND PERHAPS WITH OTHER GULF STATES IN SUPPORT OF CAMP DAVID. YOU AND ROY DID YOUR WORK WELL AFTER ALEXANDRIA.

B. ON THE OTHER, THEY ARE DOING TWO THINGS, PERHAPS WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS IN THE WORLD, THAT COULD WORK SERIOUSLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S DISADVANTAGE: FIRST, THEY ARE--FOR INSTANCE IN TALKING TO THE SYRIANS--SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE PEACE PROCESS TO THE PRESIDENT. SECOND, THEY ARE--AS IN KHALID'S SENTENCE PRESSING FOR PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION--SETTING UP A STANDARD FOR MEASURING THE OUTCOME AT CAMP DAVID THAT IS NOT ACHIEVABLE.

4. DELICATE QUESTION WE FACE IS HOW TO KEEP SAUDIS WITH US WHILE AT THE SAME TIME INJECTING SOME REALISM INTO THEIR THINKING ABOUT WHAT CAN COME OUT OF CAMP DAVID TALKS. IN ONGOING CONTACTS WITH SAUDI LEADERSHIP PRIOR TO CAMP DAVID, YOU SHOULD, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO
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EXPRESS USG APPRECIATION FOR ACTIVE ROLE SAG IS PLAYING IN SEEKING ARAB SUPPORT FOR CAMP DAVID MEETING, WHILE BEARING IN MIND THAT NET EFFECT OF THEIR APPROACH IS TO MAKE PRESIDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACHIEVING WHAT IS PROBABLY UNACHIEVABLE. ONE WAY TO HANDLE PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION IS TO REPEAT, AS ROY DID WITH FAHD, THAT WE THINK THE PRESIDENT'S ASWAN FORMULATION IS THE WAY TO EXPRESS THAT. WE WELCOME SAUDI SUPPORT, BUT I DON'T THINK WE CAN DO SO UNCRITICALLY. DON'T WE NEED TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON FACT THAT THEY COULD BE PREPARING ARAB WORLD TO RALLY AROUND SADAT, BLAMING US FOR FAILURE, IF OUTCOME DOES NOT MEET THEIR ADVANCE BILLING?

5. FYI: WE ARE CONSIDERING ADVISABILITY OF A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY TO CROWN PRINCE FAHD SHORTLY BEFORE THE SUMMIT TO SHOW U.S. APPRECIATION FOR SAUDI EFFORTS AND TO FIRM UP SAUDI SUPPORT IF NECESSARY. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE UTILITY AND TIMING OF SUCH A MESSAGE. MEANWHILE, WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO TO MAKE THEIR EXPECTATIONS MORE REALISTIC WITHOUT LEADING THEM TO THE CONCLUSION AGAIN THAT WE ARE BACKING

OFF? END FYI. VANCE

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